

BROKEN CHAIN

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Abstract

In our near future the renting of people's bodies has commoditized into a bizarre beauty industry. Sibyl, a young model for a popular body-leasing company, uncovers a twisted conspiracy forcing her to investigate this industry where even the most basic principles of beauty, control and identity have become distorted.

Broken Chain is a feature-length science fiction screenplay, which utilizes elements of the murder mystery genre to explore a fantastical reality that echoes many of the issues of consumerism and commercialized beauty that we face today.

The world of *Broken Chain* is intended to be one which the audience could find both intriguing and repulsive, as the film depicts how values of a society can be so easily altered by technology and industry, in particular the beauty industry's impact on our sense of identity and attitude towards our own bodies.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor Colleen Wagner, for her patience and insight. This project went through drastic changes throughout, and I'm not sure it would have come to fruition had it not been for Colleen's guidance and understanding toward the type of story and themes I wanted to explore. Often there was a tug-of-war decision-making between us, in regard to the overall plot, scenes and character development. But looking back, the adjustments Colleen suggested, which often required her to patiently wait for me to come to terms with, were always helpful towards moving this project in the right direction and I am incredibly grateful for her wisdom and understanding as a storyteller.

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Origins

The original concept for *Broken Chain* began with a short story I wrote four years ago called *A Perfect Host*, in which a man was able to rent out the complete control of his body to paying customers. As well as exploring the concept of submitting complete control to another, the short also delved into more science-fiction concepts, such as the protagonist losing his own sense of identity, and as habits and memories from his customers remained inside his mind. The themes of this short were initially more prevalent in earlier drafts of *Broken Chain* but were later toned down.

Since producing a viral campaign video on Transgender Awareness for Ireland's LGBT, I have become increasingly interested in the sense of identity and value we associate from our body and identities and how these physical elements shape us and our integration with the outside world. Recent scientific studies on 'simulated body and gender swaps' at the University of Barcelona and MIT studies into the transfer of consciousness through 'optogenetics' sparked in me an inner curiosity and debate. How would I, or others, have the ability to occupy a foreign body? And what fulfillments or delusions could this create about our sense of reality or individuality?

While humoring my younger brother one night I found myself watching one of his preferred MTV programs, entitled *Catfish*; a term which describes the phenomenon of people who create fake identities and entire relationships with others, through social media, without ever meeting. A persistent aspect of 'catfish-ing' involved the creator of these identities stealing pictures of other 'more desirable' looking people and hiding behind a new identity using their image. The irony was that when these 'catfish-ers' were exposed, during the course of each episode, the question was often asked of them, 'why they did this?' A possible answer was always presented during the commercial breaks of these shows, which were persistently of stunning looking people, predominantly young women, selling products utilizing their beauty and

sexuality. Why indeed would someone feel so insecure as to mask their image with that of a more conventionally 'beautiful, skinny' person, in order to feel accepted or desired? Five seasons of *Catfish* later and they're still not certain of the source.

I further explored the roots to this social phenomenon of phantom narcissism and exhibitionism by researching studies done by various modern sociological and psychoanalytic scholars such as C.J Carpenter, C. Calvert and R.W. Belk. I also looked at older examinations of body and image conceptions, particularly Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic essays and seminars on 'the mirror stage', which delved into the initial stages of identity experienced by infants when they first see their own reflection in a mirror. This, according to Lacan, would further develop into a dual relationship of both the body and the ego, but also the real and the imaginary. This dual relationship would become a prominent theme in *Broken Chain* as the ability to hide, behind the body of another, creates disillusionment within many of the characters, such as Cody and Larissa Abney.

A later inspiration came from the Netflix' documentary, *Hot Girls Wanted*, which looked at the business of amateur porn and its impact on the young women it employed. At one point I thought of surrogating and body leasing as being a new type of pornography for the *Broken Chain* world, but that ended up feeling very narrow. What intrigued me about *Hot Girls Wanted* was not the nature of pornography itself, but the actual nature of the business. The film documented many aspirational young women seduced into the lifestyle promised by the industry, which in reality worked more like a conveyer belt that discarded them quickly, once they had lost their appeal (the average porn actress' career lasts between four and six months, according to the documentary). The supply and demand nature of porn was what I was interested in, which was arguably identical to the high turn-over of the entertainment and modeling industry too. Thus I decided that surrogacy should be a portrayal of the beauty industry as a whole.

My intrigue into combining these fantastical elements with the beauty industry stemmed from two controversial movies that explored this world, the anime classic *Perfect Blue* and the cerebral horror, *The Neon Demon*. *Perfect Blue* created a chilling depiction of the marketing of sexuality, particularly during a topless photo shoot scene with a young female pop star, which thanks to its distorted visuals and audio, was unsettling rather than erotic. *The Neon Demon* got criticism for its depiction of sexual violence and its pretty schlocky finale, but for me, it created an ensnaring atmosphere of a culture driven insane by beauty and youth, with a thematically appropriate climax involving a group of struggling models killing and feasting on a younger, more popular, woman to absorb her essence.

Another important mention is the film *Being John Malkovich*, in which a man discovers a porthole into the mind of John Malkovich, allowing him to control and experience the life of the famous actor. This dark comedy dealt with the surreal concept of attraction and sexuality, while occupying total control of another person's body.

With no clear grasp as to how I could combine all of the above elements into one story I set out to write a science fiction thriller that manifested the beauty industry into a new realm, where beautiful people were no longer advertising the consumption of clothes, make-up or even sex, but the ownership of themselves. The temporary control of a 'desired person' in order to experience first hand their lifestyle, hide behind the fantasy of another identity or experience audacious actions without the risk of self disclosure, was something I felt could appeal to the average consumer today. I know, in full honesty, it would intrigue me. I mean who wouldn't want to escape his or her own problems, for a little while, by literally controlling the body of someone else?

Genre

As a writer I have always tried to expose my own fears and prejudices in my work. For me, science fiction and horror are the perfect genres to explore the issues, anxieties and fears of the modern age. My most admired filmmaker for this is David Cronenberg, who demonstrates to me how projecting subject matter into a fantastical realm makes it even more profound and unavoidable to ignore for an audience, such as delving into the impact of media on the mind by having a character literally become mutated from watching a television program in *Video Drome*; or the culture of repeated cycles of domestic violence in a family, represented by vicious killer infants following the repressed desires of an abused mother in *The Brood*.

This mantra was later continued, though in a less abstract way, by the British Television program *Black Mirror*, which depicted different worlds and characters who were all impacted and altered, in some way, by new fictional pieces of technology. *Black Mirror* also helped me realize that even when you change only one thing in a world, you change everything. This forced me to expand upon my own story by conceptualizing how body leasing would have a ripple effect on various aspects of this future society, such as consumerism and relationships, along with the general look of the world.

Also in the vein of movies such as Spike Jonze's *Her*, in which a man falls in love with an operating system on his phone, I wanted *Broken Chain* to look at people immersed in a unique world and the effect a new piece of technology can have on their ability to be intimate or exposed with one another.

The concept of surrogacy, or the transference of one's consciousness into a foreign body, has been explored before in various other science fiction movies, many of which dealt with themes of youth obsession and/or reincarnation. *Self/Less* told the story of a dying rich man who has his consciousness transferred into a younger body

and, as a result, finds both the consciousness of his mind and the consciousness of the body fighting against each other for control. In the Netflix's released movie, *Advantageous*, a middle-aged woman is forced to transfer her consciousness into a younger body, essentially reincarnating herself, so she can succeed in her youth obsessed industry.

The science fiction novel *Altered Carbon*, which is also being developed into a TV series for Netflix, depicted a world where death no longer existed, as people's consciousness are digitalized so they can be transferred from body to body.

Broken Chain will also touch on some of the themes of these movies, predominantly modern society's obsession with youth and the concept of reincarnating into a younger body. But where I feel *Broken Chain* differs is in its portrayal of surrogacy as a type of established beauty industry and the act of body renting as a form of consumerism. Also in all of the above films, the bodies being occupied (or taken over) were already lifeless. So the idea of a person renting their body out, for others to control, has yet to be explored in any of these conceptions, as well as the impact surrogating other bodies could have on clients who get addicted to this type of market.

Broken Chain also follows the formula of the popular tech noir sub genre, essentially science fiction movies that adapt the structure of the detective murder/mystery or elements of film noir as a more conventional vehicle to navigate their story. The most popular examples are movies like *Blade Runner*, *Dark City*, *Minority Report* or *Strange Days*. Many of these movies took a more conventional route by having a detective, of some sort, as the lead role. An understandable choice, given the advantage such a protagonist has in terms of relevant resources, skills and motivation in order to take them and us, the audience, through the plot. The concept of having Sibyl, who is this world's equivalent of a supermodel, in the role of the detective added numerous challenges but also intriguing possibilities to the story. She lacks the physical capabilities to muscle her way out of a situation or the formal

skills of a regular detective, and thus has her fast-thinking resourcefulness and advantageous knowledge of the surrogacy industry to unravel this conspiracy.

Broken Chain has some parallels, as well, to the staples of the film noir, a genre I have persistent love for, all the way down to the old Raymond Chandler mysteries, which inspired many of these movies throughout the 30s and 40s, as well as the neo-noirs that followed such as *Chinatown* and *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*.

Greta, in the film noir genre, would be the fallen dame: The murdered innocent whose, seemingly, simple death is actually the key to a far more complex conspiracy, involving people of higher power or respect, circa *The Nice Guys* or *The Third Man*. The detective getting cornered or kidnapped at the end is also a persistent trope for the final act, such as in *The Big Sleep* or *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*. As well as the, what I liked to call, 'final lose end reveal', whereby even after the big climax the detective will still have one last culprit to put away in order to finally wrap up the case. This is often someone they were very close to and considered an ally, as in the finale to *The Long Goodbye*.

Through its futuristic concept, my hope is that *Broken Chain* will build on previous examinations of sexuality, identity and control as portrayed in the aforementioned movies and books, while also showing the audience something both unique and fantastical, and yet eerily familiar and impactful. A high bar to set for oneself, I admit. To what degree I achieve this, if any, I will have to leave for you, the reader, to decide.

Theme

As you will see later, in greater detail, there were many thematic aspirations I wished to explore in this film, but due to the limitations that come with a 2-hour screenplay the scope of the thematic backbone had to be more focused. I know from the feedback I received from many writers, that there were numerous directions the story could have taken to explore various themes and topics such as intimacy, pornography, sexuality, gender identity, and general consumption. Some of these themes and topics had to be abandoned, while others were not so much explored as touched upon during the course of the story.

As it currently stands, the main theme of *Broken Chain* is the forfeiture of control that one sometimes has to concede in order to succeed in any world, particularly one with as fast a turn over as the beauty industry, and what consequence this can have on our values and sense of identity. The surrogates in *Broken Chain* are the ultimate products; vessels of desire that customers can live through. These themes are explored through Sibyl's journey, as she learns of how the company intends to sell off certain surrogates, so more high-end clients can reincarnate into their bodies.

Likewise the effect of having others control you is experienced by both Greta and Sibyl, as they show signs of adapting their customers' habits and memories, essentially becoming completely reshaped by the very nature of their industry.

Another theme is the addiction to beauty, through the hiding of one's own identity and image behind that of another. A seemingly abstract theme years ago but now, as stated with the *Catfish* phenomenon, it is unsettlingly relevant in the modern age of social media, where people can hide behind false identities, experiencing a phantom narcissism and even acceptance through these narrow channels. This theme is explored, predominantly, through Sibyl's brother Cody; an addict of surrogating, who has become so dependent on experiencing life through the body of others that

he has lost any interest or value in his own real life, even to the point where being touched repulses him. Likewise the elderly character of Michael Bellows has also become addicted to occupying more youthful bodies, which he sometimes utilizes through fighting while in control of these physically superior vessel, so as to feel dominant and in control.

Many customers grow so addicted to expressing themselves and living through other bodies that they lose the ability to know who they really are or to be honest or intimate with one another, creating an emotionally detached society. This larger theme is seen through Cody and Sibyl's strained relationship as a result of Cody's addiction and Sibyl's own prejudice towards surrogacy addicts.

In the end Sibyl learns that the consequences of her actions and choices, to change and adapt in order to succeed in this beauty industry, have had a jeopardizing impact on her and all the other surrogates around her. The full impact of what she conceded, in terms of control and identity, in order to become successful is what she must reflect upon as a result of her journey.

The (Pseudo) Science of Surrogacy

Surrogacy is the latest popular craze, where customers can experience life through a new pair of eyes and literally walk around in someone else's body. Alter Scope is the number one body leasing company in the world. Surrogates, their employees, are regular people who rent the temporary control of their bodies out to paying customers.

The scientific mind behind this, Larissa Abney, is now a major shareholder at the company. Abney developed the technology for surrogacy with altruistic aspirations, hoping surrogacy could bring people closer together by allowing them to experience life through the eyes of one another, as well as creating a service that would allow those with disabilities, challenges or inhibitions to still experience the abundance of life.

A surrogacy microchip is inserted behind the ear of both client and surrogate. These chips work like satellites, between two brains, allowing the client's consciousness to be in sync with the surrogate's body, ensuring that during the session the customer has full control. Surrogacy chip installment is complimentary to all first time customers at Alter Scope. The surrogacy chip creates an optical protrusion within the eyes of the surrogate during synchronization. This signal, sent from the chip to the retinas, causes a color change in the eyes of the surrogate. This is a 'tell' for someone being surrogated, if you were to have previously known the true eye color of that surrogate. Beyond this, there are very few ways to tell if someone is being surrogated or not, outside of knowing the person's natural mannerisms.

Originally the surrogacy hood, a type of helmet, was used to make surrogacy possible, though only for a matter of minutes to test it out on the public. The hood would be attached to the customer's head, which then activated the surrogacy chip. These hoods were quickly pulled from the market, as they could only support these very short-term surrogacy sessions before running the risk of damage to the

customer. Alter Scope conceded many lawsuits from customers, who suffered aneurisms while using the surrogacy hood. The surrogacy hood is used in the film to help Sibyl infiltrate the Alter Scope building, whilst surrogating the body of a company employee.

The surrogacy pod was then developed, which ensured the safety of the client's body while surrogating someone else, as well as maintaining enhanced support for more intricate movements even as delicate as the twitch of a finger, during sessions. The surrogacy pod is a cocoon shaped metallic pod, not unlike a tanning bed, which the customer is attached to during sessions. The pod is now standard at Alter Scope and various other body leasing companies.

The Surrogacy Industry

Beyond the life changing experience and possibilities, advertised by Alter Scope and other body leasing companies, surrogacy is still a business. And like any other business demand dictates the face and nature of it. Of the thousands of surrogates registered with Alter Scope 90% are between the ages of 18-32. Seventy percent are female, predominantly thin and attractive, with a significant disproportion in racial diversity due to customer demands. Sibyl, who is part Asian, is an exception to the rule predominantly because of how she dresses and looks (persistently dying her hair blonde). She understands the game and how to play it. Surrogates are well paid and are placed in luxurious condos, owned by Alter Scope. However most have very short-lived careers, as clients get bored quickly with the same bodies and there is always a younger, more attractive, person waiting to take their place.

Surrogates are refrained from having any distinct body art, as the idiosyncrasies may detach the customer from the fantasy of imprinting their own identity or a made-up second identity through the surrogate. Essentially surrogates need to be attractive but blank vessels. Likewise severe allergies will make a surrogate ineligible. Can't expect a client to go out in another body, while trying to remember what specific food they can or cannot eat. While surrogates would be considered the super models of this world they can experience some prejudice from the public. The derogatory term 'skin' is often labeled on them, demeaning surrogates as merely a pretty piece of skin controlled by customers.

The cost of surrogacy depends on: 1. What company you go through. 2. How long your session is. And 3. What specific surrogate you are renting? (The more popular ones will obviously be more expensive). A cheap surrogacy session could be as costly as seeing a Broadway show, a little treat you could afford from time to time. An expensive session would be the equivalent of renting out the penthouse of a five star hotel.

Clients are legally accountable for any actions they take while surrogating another person. Otherwise the client is free to do whatever they desire. Some even create second identities when regularly renting out the same body over and over again.

The World of *Broken Chain*

The world of *Broken Chain*, outside of surrogacy, is similar to ours but with some significant changes. The average high-rise building is fitted with reflective projection windows, allowing them to project advertisements throughout the working day, creating a jarring spectacle at times.

The over immersion of HD quality has created a backlash in visual imagery too. Instead of crisp, clear, visuals the public now favor fantastical, dream-like, imagery for advertisements, posters and even personal photographs. Images are now altered or enhanced into an oil canvas-like filter, predominantly black and white, as though the new ideals of beauty have pushed beyond realism into the perceived perfections of pure fantasy. In keeping with this imagery, fashion followers prefer purely black or white clothing, while colored clothing could be an indication of someone being from the lower classes.

As with surrogacy, the concept of wealth or luxury is to be able to change and alter the image of, not just yourself, but the world around you. Luxury condos are fitted with screen walls, floors and ceilings, meaning you can change these at any given moment, as easily as you would change the background of your laptop. Thus, luxury is the ability to alter between various looks and styles. You could have friends over for lunch in your cozy hardwood floored, warm colored, condo one day and then have them over for cocktails in your sleek dark tiled, white walled, abode the next. Thus, the people below upper class are ones whose homes cannot be altered at a whim or who cannot afford to experience life in the body of various desired people, through surrogacy.

The Writing Process

I have never been one for going out to a meadow to write under a tree, so as to get inspiration. Forcing myself inside a room, alone with my laptop, till I've clocked my writing quota for the day sums up my writing process. I have often approached writing not as an art but as a trade.

Many of the people I admire, from writers to sports stars, were ones who envisioned achieving their goals in a very 9-5 sort of way; 'talent is just a concept. Clock in the hours every day and treat it like a job you're being paid for.' Inspiration for me is always incidental. It is rarely something you can premeditate in advance, so as to help you out with whatever story or plot issue you are experiencing. And should never be something you sit around and wait for.

Thus, I was insistent that Colleen and I always enforced strict deadlines for my submissions. During my first year at York I developed various first act drafts, treatments and outlines for my committee. Many of these documents were, vaguely proposed, directions in which the story could take. By the end of the Winter Term of 2016 we had a more grounded idea of what direction the film would go in. From May to August I submitted six breakdowns (outlines and treatments) to my committee for review. By September I began to draft out the script, resulting in seven reviewed drafts from then up till now.

For me, the process of sending out your work to be analyzed, adjusted and criticized is always painful, no matter how much you attempt to cast aside your ego. Each time I sent out a new draft there was always a deceptive little voice in my head saying 'Maybe this time it will be just perfect and there will be no notes'. The voice was always proven wrong of course. From there my process would usually consist of reading the notes, feeling defeated, taking a little break, reading them again with a clearer head, and then getting down to brainstorming ways of fixing the problems.

I was relieved to learn that I was not the only one who experiences this type of frustration when I read Michael Piller's book, *Fade In*, which documented the writer's journey and constant frustrations at developing the movie *Star Trek: Insurrection*. And if my experience of producing and editing short films, back in Ireland, taught me anything it's that nothing is worse than shooting and completing a movie only to realize its flaws were ones that should have been adjusted during the writing process.

So as I write this now I know that there may very well be many more drafts to come for *Broken Chain* and that the gut-punch of criticism will come with it. But writing is re-writing and while it will never be easy it is something I have come to accept as inevitable. As Samuel Beckett put it (because why wouldn't I quote a fellow Irish man in this?), 'Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.'

Characters

Sibyl - Protagonist

Sibyl is a registered surrogate for Alter Scope. She comes from a working class background. Her father was from China and her mother American. But despite that, in 'surrogacy' terms, she is a bit atypical: not a blonde, blue-eyed Caucasian, Sibyl has learnt how to overcome that bias and excel in the industry. Sibyl knew that 'ethnic' models, as the company would put it, are often limited in Alter Scope's galleries and don't last long as demand is usually not as high for them, compared to Caucasian surrogates. Sibyl, therefore, enhances her features by dying her hair blonde and dressing certain ways, to ensure she is viewed as an exotic but traditional looking surrogate. It's a dirty game, but Sibyl is willing to play it so long as it strengthens her future at the company, placing her amongst the most popular body types for customers to lease.

Sibyl grew up during the boom of this industry and has learnt to adapt to this world, in order to secure a better life for herself. She knows very well what appeal she has towards the average surrogacy customer. Through her, people can feel desired walking down the street, men can experience intercourse as a woman and audacious actions can be taken without the risk of self-disclosure.

As a surrogate with Alter Scope she has wealth and a luxurious lifestyle, which she has secured alongside her lover, Greta, a more senior surrogate at Alter Scope and a former poster girl for the industry during its earlier years. Sibyl, however, is savvy to the negative aspects of the business. She has seen plenty of surrogates get left with nothing from the industry, once they get older, and has also witnessed the repercussions of surrogacy addiction first hand through her own brother, Cody. Sibyl is still a realist though and knows this industry can work for her benefit in the long run if she plays her cards right. She is building her intricate knowledge of the industry so that she can continue her career within Alter Scope in a managerial

position, a position no surrogate has ever held before. Sibyl is preparing for the inevitable firing she would otherwise get once demand for renting her body went down.

Sibyl sees surrogacy as the best way to build a secure life. She would have the smarts and determination to succeed in other careers, but surrogacy has the most potential and Sibyl can make little sense of struggling to make a living in another profession when the doors of opportunity through surrogacy are much brighter. Sibyl is also convinced that, as the company and surrogacy industry are so new, that it will give her an advantage to help reshape the industry, bringing it fresh new ideas so she can still be on the ground floor while it expands further. Surrogacy won't just offer Sibyl security, if she plays her cards right. It can also make her set for life.

Many customers, while surrogating Sibyl, create bubbly and flirty personalities. In contrast to how people assume she would act, Sibyl is a very calculating and ambitious person. Sibyl's self motivated and focused approach can make her come off as a little cold at times, but her warm side can be seen through her tenderness and love towards Greta. However Sibyl's ultimate vulnerability is her unwitting dependence on the industry for her future aspirations. This is exposed when Greta, struggling with her numbers and the fear of losing her contract, questions if Sibyl would choose her over the company?

When Sibyl suspects foul play behind Greta's suicide, she uses the knowledge and skills that she acquired from her time at the industry as a means of uncovering the truth. For example a playful game enjoyed by Sibyl, of spotting who in a room is being surrogated, is later used by Sibyl as a survival tactic to foresee anyone within the company who may try attack her under the guise of a surrogated body.

As the mystery unravels and Sibyl finds herself in increasing danger, she must learn to think on her feet in order to outwit the conspirators within her company and get justice for Greta's death.

Boudica – Antagonist

Boudica, 80s, was the financier to Larissa Abney's surrogacy experiments. This led to Boudica creating Alter Scope. Boudica, as a powerful and wealthy individual, uses surrogacy as a means to live as many different types of lives as possible. She has her own personal surrogacy pods and private surrogates, whom she alternates between as though they were items of clothing.

Some of her personal surrogates are similar to servants, living with her in her mansion and working there whether she is surrogating them or not. However Boudica also enjoys surrogating the bodies of more powerful people, whom she pays handsomely in order to experience their lives: such as cops, lawyers, dancers, performers etc.

For Boudica, surrogacy opens up a realm of opportunities, whereby she can be any type of person at any given time. She has become so used to this, in fact, that very few people at Alter Scope have ever seen what she actually looks like, as she always enters the offices in the body of one of her personal surrogates. Thus, she has an almost Gatsby-like air of mystery to her, as few know that this powerful, self-made, omni-being is actually just a feeble old woman. Beyond surrogating, Boudica also has a prototype skin-tight suit, designed exclusively for her, which projects the ideal image of a beautiful woman across her face and body.

Boudica is a major expansionist; with a never-ending hunger to dominate the market she has created, pushing her scope beyond the regular realms of morality. Boudica has little regard for the surrogates hired under Alter Scope. To her they are signing away the control of their lives, degrading them to little more than products, which belong to the company. Many of the investors she brought on, during the early phases of surrogacy, were predominantly interested in one thing: The possibility of reincarnation through surrogacy. The ability to permanently transfer consciousness into a younger, healthier, body.

Boudica has persisted in the continued research into this and now has created her own black market for these high paying customers. Boudica doesn't see this venture as either murderous or risky, but rather the next phase in her continued dominance over the industry she helped create.

Boudica has her own personal stake in these experiments as well. Having lived so many different lives, through surrogacy, she has neglected the care of her own aging body. Boudica knows she will also need to make a permanent transition into a younger vessel soon. She has helped create an enterprise and the frailty of her own body should not stop her from enjoying that further, especially if surrogacy can now make death obsolete. Boudica fears the process going wrong, however, and thus has created this black market not only to appease the investors but to test out this procedure on others first, before she risks it on herself. Boudica has no interest in leaving behind a legacy after she dies. She intends on living throughout her legacy. Boudica could very well become a real-life Dorian Gray if she can get these experiments to work.

Boudica's network of surrogates create a constant barrier in Sibyl's investigation, such as when she goes to the police station only to realize one of Boudica's surrogates is actually a cop. Boudica also utilizes her network to track down Abney, when she learns of her and Carol's investigation into 'Broken Chain', and even takes over the body of one of her surrogates so she can try to shoot Abney, without putting any risk to her own body.

Cody – Ally/Antagonist

Sibyl's older brother, Cody, 27, is a frequent customer of surrogacy to the point that he has developed an addiction to renting surrogate bodies in order to interact and socialize with the outside world. Cody feels a sense of safety and confidence when inhabiting more 'ideal' bodies than his own and has now become dependent on it. In his own body Cody is quite uncomfortable when talking to people and takes little interest in his own hygiene or appearance. Even human touch on his own skin makes him visibly uncomfortable now.

Before this addiction Cody was a very passionate technician. Cody didn't interact much with the other kids in his neighbourhood, due to his social anxiety, and would often stay in his room so he could engage in his favourite hobby; mending old computers and devices, including old models of equipment used during the early days of surrogacy. Cody was a nervous kid but secretly longed to be confident, attractive and desired by others. He just never had the courage to step out of his comfort zone and try to work on these insecurities. Once he turned eighteen he was old enough to lease out surrogate bodies and, thus, never needed to work on his social inhibitions, as he could just act and live the way he wanted while feeling secure inside the bodies of other, more desirable, people.

Cody lost interest in his hobbies, as a result, but his basic technical skill set remained, allowing him to work as a surrogacy pod controller at various body-leasing companies. His recent hiring by Alter Scope, allowing him to further afford his expensive habit, is much to Sibyl's disapproval.

Cody's addiction became apparent to Sibyl when he abandoned her during their father's funeral. Cody couldn't handle dealing with his own pain and so went to a body-leasing company so he could escape into the body of another. From that point on Cody became more distant from Sibyl and everyone else in his own life. The excitement and confidence he experiences while inhabiting the body of others, only

enhanced as he started to take less care of his own physical health. Now, living in his own body and identity has become an ordeal similar to a full time smoker going several hours without a cigarette. His constant scratching, while in his own body, is a clear indication of this. But with his new position at Alter Scope he can finally afford to experience more of his free time in superior bodies where he has the confidence to interact with others, feel accepted and enjoy life.

When Sibyl first approaches Cody for help with her investigation he is resistant, assuming that Sibyl is just paranoid and struggling to accept Greta's suicide. After Cody helps her get Greta's surrogacy logs, through his technical know-how and position within the company, he is then further convinced that this is all in Sibyl's head when the logs fail to substantiate any of her claims.

Cody once again becomes a force of antagonism for Sibyl when she tries to approach him after she is threatened during a surrogacy session. Sibyl and Cody have a full confrontation, as she tries to convince him that Alter Scope is covering up something big. When Sibyl chastises him for his surrogacy addiction Cody pushes away from his sister, convinced now that she sees him as just another addict like all the other customers.

When Cody realizes Sibyl is in real danger after seeing evidence of her sickness, he is confronted by how this addiction caused him to abandon her years ago. Cody then becomes Sibyl's ally and helps her to infiltrate the secrets of Alter Scope, even though it puts his own life in extreme danger.

Greta – Catalytic Character

Greta, 26, has been in the industry two years longer than Sibyl and was once the most sought after surrogate at Alter Scope. In contrast to Sibyl, Greta is a far more open and sweet natured person. She has a love of classic cinema and enjoys collecting converted film reels (small film reels for home projectors, the latest trend

which echoes in some ways the vinyl revival of our own time). Sibyl, a constant pragmatic mind, can rarely shut off her planning to indulge in getting lost within a movie the same way Greta does.

Greta has porcelain white skin and model features, making her a standard popular body type, but her natural fire-red hair and light freckles gave her an edge, which helped make her stand out from the others. Greta quickly became one of the most popular body types to rent as a result of her classic Caucasian features, combined with her minute idiosyncrasies. Greta grew up middle class and so does not have the same intense determination to last forever in the industry as Sibyl does. Greta would have been willing to go back to a more modest life, once her time of luxury at Alter Scope was over, if it weren't for Sibyl's determination to build their future around the company.

Greta and Sibyl first met when Greta was told to prep Sibyl, then a new recruit, about what to expect during her first session (her first experience of giving up complete control of her body for a customer to control). Sibyl was initially dismissive of Greta trying to help, presenting her usual obsession with always being in the know and in control. Greta, however, was not put off by Sibyl's coldness and instead stood up to her, something Sibyl was not used to. Greta managed to ease Sibyl into acknowledging her own vulnerability. From there they began to hang out, and pretty soon a romantic relationship blossomed. Greta's warm natured personality complemented Sibyl's stern focus and ambition. Together they have created a strong relationship, whereby they support each other with the various difficulties of being surrogates. However, they still refrain from openly talking about the details of their sessions, as neither wants to end up judging the other over the actions taken with their bodies while they were not in control.

Greta's hay days are coming to an end, as her numbers have dwindled down to only one regular customer surrogating her body now. Even though she was once Alter Scope's poster girl, she knows that she will not be immune to losing her contract like

the others, meaning she would have to leave the luxurious condo she shares with Sibyl, as it is under Alter Scope's name, as well as the lifestyle she has become accustomed to.

Greta fears telling Sibyl any of this, as Sibyl is so focused on her own career path that Greta isn't sure if Sibyl would choose her over the future that Alter Scope can provide. Greta is also suffering from a bizarre sickness after going through tests at Alter Scope. Further tests under the company have found nothing physically wrong with her, resulting in Greta hiding this sickness as best she can, so as not to further risk her dwindling numbers.

Despite her best efforts, the signs are showing as Greta not only begins to get sick but also starts becoming more forgetful, as her memories get muddled with those of her clients. Greta's final decision to attend a late night session, even though she is sick, results in her death. Greta's decision, though somewhat motivated by desperation to stay within the company, was more so motivated by love. Greta felt she was doing what she needed to in order to hold together the future both her and Sibyl had been planning together.

Larissa Abney – Secondary Antagonist

Larissa Abney, 40s, is the mind behind surrogacy. Her thesis on this subject eventually found its way into the hands of Boudica, and from that point on she has begrudgingly been bound to Boudica's commercial vision. Boudica was the only investor who saw potential in Abney's, radical, scientific experiments and thus it was through her and her wide connections that Abney's project got the funding it needed. From that point on Boudica and her investors owned Abney's research and it would be them who decided what it would be used for, commercially or otherwise. While Abney never imagined surrogacy turning into the beauty industry that it is today, she still believes that it has had an overwhelmingly positive impact

on society. Abney is held by the positive memories of surrogacy helping a deaf man to hear music or a paraplegic to run again, among other examples.

However, Abney is not immune to the delusions that many other customers have gone through, such as the creation and dependence of another life while habitually inhabiting the body of another. Abney surrogated Greta two years ago, back when she was still the poster girl of the industry. Abney was curious as to what all the fuss was about with regards this one surrogate?

While inhabiting Greta's body, Abney was seduced by the way people looked upon her and treated her in this body. While in a café, a man approached her and asked for her name? To Abney's surprise she found herself giving a fake name, Milly, and thus the fantasy of living a second life only proliferated from there. To contrast her own hectic and impressive life, as the famous creator of surrogacy, Abney created a simpler life through Milly.

Aware that Greta's image was well known, Abney decided to get away from the city, while leasing the body, so she could indulge in a new life, creating a brand new identity: Someone pure. The delusion got further out of hand. Abney created a social insurance number, bank account and even bought a house under the name of this fake persona. Milly was an escape from the city and Abney's hectic life. Milly lived in a small cottage, made friends from the lower classes and experienced a sense of community that wasn't available to Abney in the Alter Scope world. Beyond beauty and being desired, Abney wanted a quaint and pure existence, which she got as Milly. Abney's dependence was not based on the frailty of her own body, like Boudica, or any insecurity about her image, like with Cody. It was simply that life as Milly was better. Milly had no past mistakes. Milly had no inhibitions. Life through Milly seemed simply perfect. It began as a daydream to escape into, but then Abney became more immersed and dependent on this daydream.

When Abney learned that Boudica was going to sell Greta off to some investor, behind her back, Abney felt as though a part of her had died. Milly, this life she had spent so much time as, was going to be taken away from her. Abney decided that if Milly was going to die, she would die her own way, not theirs. Abney got Carol to help cover up the murder by wiping the records of Abney's sessions with Greta. Carol also agreed to help Abney uncover evidence of Boudica's black market so that they could expose her.

Abney thought this industry would bring her a better life, not realizing how dependent she had become of it and blinded by what it was taking away from her. For this reason her and Sibyl were, similarly, affected by this industry. Sibyl realizes that, she too, was warped by the false promises of surrogating and was also, in many ways, responsible for Greta's death because of this dependence.

Originally, during the development of the script, Larissa was actually male and was named Laurence Abney, after a character from the short story, *Lost Hearts*, by Irish horror writer M.R. James. Mr. Abney, in *Lost Hearts*, was a rich aristocrat who cut out the hearts of humans and other creatures to extract their aura, strength and youth. As well as the thematic relevance of a character that wishes to live through, and absorb the youth of others, Laurence Abney was also more aristocratic and smarmy in the original drafts.

Eventually, the interpretation of a more humble scientist deluded by his own fantasy, took priority. Laurence Abney was later changed to Larissa Abney, as I felt the idea of Laurence wanting to live as Greta (or Milly) would confuse the audience into thinking I was making some negative interpretation of real life gender transitioning. This was not the intention but, as I wouldn't have had an appropriate amount of room in the story to fully explore Laurence's reasons without drastically slowing up the plot, I decided to switch the character to Larissa Abney to make the intentions a little simpler.

Story Breakdown

Logline: In our near future the renting out of people's bodies has become commercialized into a bizarre beauty industry. Sibyl, a young model for a popular body-leasing company, uncovers a twisted conspiracy, forcing her to investigate this industry where even the most basic principles of beauty, control and identity have become distorted.

Act 1

1. The Set Up

The beginning of the script is designed to set up a number of key elements: the main characters are introduced, the world is revealed along with its rules, rhythm, tone, genre, and sense of premise (theme). In the film noir genre this involves introducing the key players of the conspiracy that will later unfold during the course of the plot. These players are often powerful, respected, people of the world, who are seemingly innocent until the clues eventually lead directly to them in the later acts (*Chinatown*, *The Big Sleep*).

In Act 1 of *Broken Chain*, Sibyl's world and her attitude towards her industry is introduced, as well as her romantic relationship with Greta, a sister surrogate who was once a poster girl for the company. We witness the luxurious lifestyle both Sibyl and Greta are accustomed to, thanks to their positions as surrogates at Alter Scope, as well as an understanding into how the technology of surrogacy works. An early scene shows us Sibyl, during a session, being controlled by Michael Bellows, an elderly man, and then later awakening from the session, back in control of her own self.

Sibyl is shocked to learn that her brother Cody, a surrogacy addict, has just been hired by Alter Scope as a pod technician, much to her dismay. We see here that Sibyl

is rather cold and disregarding to people who suffer from this addiction, and her brother is no exception. Sibyl also becomes concerned about a sickness that Greta is developing.

Despite all this, Sibyl remains sharply focused on her plans for furthering her career within the company, particularly in regards to the upcoming party being hosted by the company's reclusive owner, Boudica, who spends most of her time occupying the bodies of her own private surrogates. At this party we are introduced to a surrogate friend of Sibyl's called Max, who keeps a close relationship with customers who surrogate him. This is unusual, as most surrogates would naturally have little interest in interacting with their clientele. Max, however, feels that since customers and surrogates technically spend so much time together they might as well get to know each other outside of the sessions as well. Sibyl also meets Michael Bellows, in person, as he is also one of Max's more senior clients/friends.

At the party Sibyl manages to speak with Larissa Abney, the scientific mind behind surrogacy, in the hopes of furthering her career with Abney's help. Sibyl approaches Abney, while she is conversing with a bulky man named Sloane, 30s. While speaking to Abney about the issues of the company Abney informs her that Sloane is actually one of Boudica's personal surrogates whom she is in control of right now. Sibyl is shocked that she was just saying all this to the owner of the company without realizing. Boudica/Sloane laughs it off however.

At Boudica's party, Greta's sickness gets worse and Sibyl is forced to take her home. At their condo Greta confesses to Sibyl the severity of her recent sickness, including moments of memory loss, which began after some standard medical tests at the company. Despite her condition, Greta is insistent on attending her next session, as her numbers have been down lately and she fears her contract being terminated if they get any worse.

This results in a confrontation in which Greta questions if Sibyl would choose her over the company? Much to Sibyl's own shame, she evades answering the question, resulting in Greta leaving to attend her session. Greta, quite hurt, promises to be back by morning.

2. The Inciting Incident

The Inciting Incident or 'call to action' is the moment in the story where the protagonist is brought into an unknown situation that will change the course of their life and, thus, spearhead the story. Often this is a situation that turns the character's life upside down or a moment that makes it clear for the protagonist that this is something they have never had to face before.

Often in the film noir it is the moment when the detective realizes the case they are on is more dangerous or complex than anything they have ever experienced before, such as when Jake discovers his supposed client, Mrs. Mulwray, is an imposter and that his case is a set up (*Chinatown*) or when Exley finds a pile of bodies at the Night Owl Café (*LA Confidential*). In *Broken Chain* it is the moment that Greta is murdered.

When Greta doesn't return, Sibyl calls her phone. While doing so Sibyl notices some strange black stains in the sink. Sibyl goes looking for Greta and manages to track her down to a remote lake town. Sibyl witnesses Greta walking into the lake but before she can reach her, Greta kills herself by slitting her own throat.

Sibyl, distraught, is convinced however that Greta was being surrogated at the time and, therefore, murdered by a client. Both the police and the company dismiss Sibyl's suspicions, causing her to suspect that Alter Scope is trying to cover this up.

3. The Turning Point

The First Turning Point is when the protagonist, in direct reaction to the inciting incident, commits to moving into an unknown world or journey. Often there will be

a hesitation from the protagonist to take this journey, as the danger of doing so should, to some extent, be understood before hand. Thus it is the protagonist's choice to move forward into the unknown/adventure, despite the risks, which pushes the movie into Act 2.

In noir this is the moment when the detective, despite warnings often in the form of a threat or beating from some undesirables, will push forward to unravel the mystery even though they know that they are in way over their heads. This occurs in *Broken Chain* when, despite Sibyl's doubts caused from misinformation by the company, she returns to the crime scene to uncover what exactly happened?

Sibyl is left uncertain after being given evidence by Alter Scope that Greta had no session that day and therefore had to have been in complete control when she put the knife to her throat.

After the funeral Sibyl gazes at a photograph of her and Greta. Sibyl focuses on Greta's eye color and reasserts her own beliefs that Greta was murdered. Sibyl sets out to track down the customer who surrogated Greta that night and uncover who exactly within the company is trying to cover it up? Sibyl returns to the lake town to question the locals.

Act 2

4. The Trials of the New World

The first half of Act Two is characterized by the 'rising action' and how the protagonist adapts or changes because of the new challenges the journey brings. This is also where the forces of antagonism begin to put pressure on the protagonist's goals. The true nature of the character should be brought to light, particularly as they have to act or think outside of their comfort zone to overcome the obstacles put in front of them.

In noir the skills and knowledge of the detective, established in the first act, can come into play but the character must also uncover new skills in order to survive, such as the character Holly Martins shifting from crime writer to an actual crime investigator in *The Third Man*. Likewise Sibyl has to go from being, essentially, a super model that other people control, to going against the company and taking on the role of a detective in this case.

The detective in the film noir may also have to enlist new allies to help them in their quest, circa when Rachel comes to Deckard's rescue in *Blade Runner*. Sibyl also recruits Cody, although he is only willing to help her up to a certain point, based on his doubts towards the reality of Sibyl's suspicions.

The detective's world view will be challenged during this section, as the conspiracy makes them uncover dark secrets about their world, circa Bud White uncovering his old partner was involved with heroine smuggling in *LA Confidential*. While Sibyl's own discovery of the cottage isn't quite the same thing, as she uncovers things done by Greta while someone else was in control, it is a similar case of her uncovering secrets about someone close to her.

From questioning the locals, Sibyl learns that the people here knew Greta as 'Milly' and have been leaving flowers by her cottage, to mourn her death. Sibyl visits the cottage. Inside she finds photographs of Greta, all with a different eye color from her natural blue, as well as pieces of identification under the name 'Milly'. Sibyl concludes, from this, that a mysterious client had been surrogating Greta's body regularly over two years and in doing so created a separate persona named Milly. Sibyl finds journals under Milly's name, and discovers that this Milly persona had her own friends, her own home and her own life. A, completely, separate identity created by a client, while inhabiting Greta's body.

Sibyl reads the final passage in the last journal, which makes reference to a 'broken chain' – some sort of code. Sibyl is convinced now that the client who created this Milly persona is the one who killed Greta.

Sibyl tries to get Cody to help her gain access into the company logs so she can try connect this 'Milly' persona to an actual client. Cody is reluctant to get involved, convinced that Sibyl is just being paranoid, and also fearful that assisting her may cost him his job at the company. Sibyl manages to guilt Cody into helping her, insinuating his abandonment of her during their father's death. Cody agrees to help her get access, but nothing more.

Sibyl returns to Alter Scope, so she can gather this evidence, by pretending that she wishes to continue as a surrogate. In doing so she is forced to take medical tests to make sure that she is still healthy enough to be surrogated. She passes the tests, seemingly with little consequences. Sibyl breaks into the office of Carol, one of Alter Scope's managers, while Cody distracts her with a fake emergency, using a signal blocker to jam the monitors for the ongoing surrogacy sessions within the building.

To Sibyl's surprise, however, none of the dates in Milly's journal coincide with dates in Greta's surrogacy logs. Desperate, Sibyl types in the words 'broken chain' into Carol's computer. Sibyl finds restricted files, with information on specific customers. Sibyl gets a call from Cody, telling her that Carol is coming back. Sibyl briskly scans through the customer information and finds information on Michael Bellows. She prints the information out and leaves the office. Sibyl now suspects that Michael Bellows is the killer. Cody convinces Sibyl not to put herself into any further risk and to just bring what she has to the police, instead.

5. Midpoint

Often referred to as the 'point of no return' for the protagonist, as their actions up to this point have now brought them into further danger from which they can no

longer turn away from. In film noir, this is when the detective realizes that they are now, themselves, caught in the web of this conspiracy, such as when March and Healey find themselves hunted by assassins at the porno party in *The Nice Guys*. Now the real danger is clear and the detective has no choice but to push forward despite the rising danger. Sibyl realizes that there is a conspiracy covering up this murder, when she is confronted at the police station.

Sibyl goes to the police, telling them she has evidence that Greta was murdered. Sloane, who turns out to be a detective in his regular life, confronts Sibyl and demands to see the evidence. Sibyl tries to leave but Sloane holds her down, demanding to know what she found? Sibyl is convinced that he is loyal to Boudica and will kill her if she has any evidence that could be used against the company. Sibyl, instead, shows him a picture of her and Greta embracing, as her 'evidence'. Sibyl then pretends to break down crying over Greta leaving her. Sloane buys it, assuming that Sibyl has no evidence at all and is just hysterical.

Sibyl, knowing now that she cannot go to the police, decides to follow the leads herself, starting with Michael Bellows and his possible involvement. Sibyl meets with Max, at one of his customer/surrogate mingles, to ask what he knows about Michael Bellows and 'broken chain'? Max gives her an old manuscript written by Larissa Abney about surrogacy. He tells Sibyl that he got it from Bellows as a gift years ago and that it references the term 'broken chain' as some sort of failed experiment that was tested out during the early years of the industry. Max also informs her of a feud Abney has created with Boudica over secrets she is withholding from her about the company.

Michael Bellows arrives at the party. Sibyl manages to keep her cool and attempts to trick Bellows into giving her information on 'broken chain' by claiming she wants him and the other investors to help her get a raise from the company. Bellows manages to evade Sibyl's attempts. Later at the party Sibyl learns that Max is quitting surrogacy, as he has been suffering from similar symptoms as Greta. He

now plans to work abroad in London through Bellows' connections.

6. The Rise of Antagonistic Forces

Just as it sounds, this is where the antagonistic forces re-double their efforts, closing in on the protagonist and, in this case, forcing the heroine into a pressurized state. Here the protagonist is put to the ultimate test. Now we will be left wondering whether or not the skills and knowledge the protagonist has gained, previous to this, will help her overcome the antagonistic forces despite the fact that they now have the upper hand.

In film noir, this is often the moment where the detective realizes that the conspirators are now covering up their tracks; witnesses go missing, their investigation comes to a dead end, and they have no one else to turn to, such as when White and Exley find the body of their prime suspect Pierce Pratchett in *LA Confidential*. Likewise in this part of *Broken Chain*, Sibyl's life is physically threatened, forcing her to go into hiding. She then discovers that she is also suffering from a severe illness because of her surrogacy sessions. Sibyl and Cody lose a potential lead, when Max goes missing, and Sibyl learns just how much danger she is in when she speaks with Larissa Abney.

Sibyl attends a session, controlled by an unknown customer. While in total control of Sibyl, the customer makes her put a broken glass to her own throat. The customer, while speaking through Sibyl, tells her to stop her investigation or she will die just like Greta did. The session ends and Sibyl, back in control, flees. Carol and Boudica, while surrogating one of her minions, bring Cody in to find out where Sibyl may have gone? Cody, sensing something sinister afoot, lies to them, revealing nothing about Sibyl's suspicions or her investigation.

Sibyl contacts Cody to tell him what happened and meets him at a secure location. Sibyl asks to borrow Cody's van so she can go hide out at their mother's home,

stating that Alter Scope will be looking for her. Cody is convinced, however, that this is all in her head and chastises her for putting his position within the company at risk. Cody tries to discredit her claims, stating that 'having all those different minds controlling you is warping your sense of reality'. This causes a confrontation, in which Sibyl calls out Cody for his addiction to surrogacy, stating that his sense of reality is the one that's twisted. Cody, hurt, gives her the keys, telling her to go back to their mother's to 'get her head straight'.

Sibyl and Cody go their separate ways but when Sibyl returns to her mother's she realizes that it is not actually her mother's home. This house belongs to the mother of one of her regular customers. Sibyl's memories have somehow become warped with that of her customers. Sibyl spits out a black liquid, identical to the stains in the sink, which Sibyl now realizes were left behind by Greta when she was getting sick. Sibyl now knows that she is suffering from the same sickness as Greta.

Cody returns home only to find that his apartment has been broken into. Cody is suspicious now. Sibyl meets up with Cody and tells him that the tests she went through must have had some effect on her and that now her memories have gotten mixed up with those of her customers, as though traces of them have been left behind like a human hard drive. Cody sees that Sibyl is really sick now and that something strange is happening within the company. He agrees to help her. Sibyl now realizes that this is no longer a case of uncovering Greta's killer, but uncovering a conspiracy that the entire company may be involved in. She must now try to destroy the very industry that gave her everything.

Sibyl and Cody go to visit Max but they discover that he has moved out of his condo, without leaving any messages. Sibyl is convinced that this has something to do with Max's sickness. Desperate, Sibyl decides to risk going to Abney, whom she and Cody believe is unconnected to Boudica's black market because of their recent feud. They go to a televised debate, which Abney and Carol are both attending. While there Sibyl sees another one of Boudica's personal surrogates. The surrogate attempts to

shoot Abney, but is intercepted by Sibyl. Amidst the chaos Cody is separated from Sibyl and a stray bullet kills Carol. Now Sibyl realizes that Boudica will stop at nothing, even the murder of her own employees.

Sibyl and Abney flee the scene and meet in a secure location, where Abney explains to her that she has also been trying to investigate Boudica's black market. Abney explains that Boudica had her do experiments, years ago, into the possibilities of a permanent transfer. Essentially transferring a customer's consciousness into the wiped brain of a surrogate.

Abney shows Sibyl footage, on a USB, of the experiment done on rats, which resulted in fatal aneurisms. According to Abney, Boudica is still convinced that permanent transfer is now possible, by altering the surrogacy chips of surrogates. This is what caused the sickness and memory loss for Greta and, now, Sibyl.

7. The All Is Lost

The antagonistic forces have put the hero on the back foot and now he/she is in a corner. Hope seems futile. The protagonist has adapted and survived the trials of Act 2 and yet the possibility that failure is inevitable, despite all of this, becomes ever present.

In noir the detective is left with a choice as to whether or not to go on with their investigation, such as when March and Healey deem their investigation a lost cause after their key witness is murdered, in *The Nice Guys*. Similarly Sibyl's journey seems like a lost cause. Abney refuses to help her and Sibyl's own attempts to steal evidence from Alter Scope are thwarted, resulting in both her and Cody being captured by the company.

Sibyl asks Larissa to help her but she is reluctant. She has no evidence and, now that Boudica is after her, Larissa believes she has no other option other than to flee, as Boudica will have her network of surrogates all over the city out to kill her. Sibyl refuses to run, determined to expose the company and bring Greta's murderers to justice. Sibyl steals the USB, without Abney seeing, and hides it inside a hole in her sleeve. Abney flees, leaving Sibyl alone.

Sibyl and Cody manage to trick Sloane into a trap. They knock him unconscious and, using an old surrogacy hood owned by Cody, hook up Sibyl's mind into Sloane's body. Sibyl (in the body of Sloane) sneaks into Alter Scope to steal medical files that could expose 'broken chain'.

Sibyl/Sloane enters the restricted medical lab, where she sees footage of Michael Bellows having his consciousness permanently transferred into the body of Max, essentially killing Max. Sibyl/Sloane realizes now why the experiments were done on her and that she too will be next for this permanent transfer.

Sibyl and Cody are caught and captured. Sibyl is taken away for the operation. Cody is brought into a van, where the surrogacy hood is forced on and powered up so it will fry his brain in a matter of minutes and look like an accident. Sibyl, back in her own body, awakens in a private medical room, where she sees Max, only now the body of her friend belongs to Michael Bellows.

8. Second Turning Point

This is often a final switch in the story or advantage that the protagonist obtains, which will help them to fight back against the antagonistic forces. Just as all seems hopeless the protagonist utilizes their resourcefulness, or some knowledge obtained from an earlier scene, to try and gain the upper hand. It can also be the realization of a deeper courage, or insight.

Often in film noir this turning point is when the detective suddenly comes across a, previously overlooked, clue that is now of the utmost importance, such as when Harmony realizes the significance of the murder victim being found without any underwear in *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* or when Jake finds a pair of glasses inside Mrs Mulwray's water fountain, forcing him to confront Mulwray about the details of her husband's death, in *Chinatown*. In *Broken Chain* it's the moment Sibyl realizes Max/Bellows knows nothing about the rat experiments. Sibyl utilizes her abilities of manipulation to stir a suspicion in Max/Bellows, which she will later be able to exploit in order to escape.

While speaking with Max/Bellows, Sibyl pulls out the USB, still hidden inside her sleeve, and tells him about a failed experiment done on rats. Sibyl gives Max/Bellows the USB and instills a suspicion within him that Boudica is using him as a lab rat, expecting him to die from the aneurisms just like the rats did. Max/Bellows forces away his suspicions, convinced that Sibyl is lying. A physician comes in and holds up a glass of water for Sibyl to drink from. Sibyl tricks him into moving it closer and bites his hand. This causes the glass to smash, leaving shards within her grasp.

But just then Boudica enters the room and asks Max/Bellows to leave. Boudica observes Sibyl and informs her that her body and mind are next for permanent take over by one of her high paying customers. Sibyl confronts Boudica for killing Greta but is shocked to learn that Boudica had nothing to do with Greta's death, as she had wished to sell her to a customer for the same operation. Sibyl is taken away on a stretcher, hiding a sharp shard of glass inside her palm.

Act 3

9. Climax

In the climax the hero must face their biggest challenge to achieve their original objective. This will generally involve some sort of show down between the protagonist and the antagonist. The stakes are at their very highest here.

In film noir the climax will often involve the detective tracking down the main culprit, or orchestrator of the conspiracy, and outsmarting them. Often it will also require the protagonist to compromise their morality or overcome an inhibition, such as when Exley decides to betray his 'by the book' mentality by shooting Captain Dudley in the back, in *LA Confidential*, or in contrast when Healy decides to spare the life of an assassin when confronted by his partner's young daughter in *The Nice Guys*. In *Broken Chain*, Sibyl must utilize the height of her manipulation skills against Max/Bellows to get him to attack Boudica. She then must destroy any aspirations or dependence she had with the company by releasing evidence against it, completely destroying Alter Scope and the future she had planned through it.

Sibyl is brought into the operating room, but manages to break free from her restraints. Sibyl forces a shard of glass to her face, essentially holding herself hostage, as Boudica will not be able to sell Sibyl's body if it is scarred in any way. Meanwhile Max/Bellows has just watched the footage on the USB and is worried now. Max/Bellows enters the operating room to confront Boudica.

Boudica tries to calm Max/Bellows but Sibyl manages to get him to read a passage from the Milly journal, while convincing him that Boudica wrote it and killed Greta herself. Max/Bellows attacks Boudica, causing enough of a distraction to allow Sibyl to escape.

Sibyl finds her way into Alter Scope's control room and realizes she can upload the operation footage of Max getting killed across the entire building for all the

customers to see. Sibyl does this, knowing full well she is now destroying the company that she had previously been so dependent on.

The footage plays across all the screens in the building, in front of the customers. The company switches off the power in the building to stop the video from playing. The power outage switches off every active surrogacy session in progress. This causes mass chaos all over the city, with surrogates dropping unconscious, as a result of their sudden disconnection from the customers controlling them. The police arrive amidst the chaos and mass arrests are made. Both Sibyl and Cody are saved. The police enter the operating room to find that Boudica and Max/Bellows have killed each other.

10. Denouement

The Denouement or Epilogue is the tying up of loose ends and a look at where the protagonist will go from here, now that the antagonistic forces have been defeated. Here we see how the protagonist's life has changed because of the forces they had to overcome and how that has reshaped them as a person, as well as how the world around them has changed.

In film noir the 'tying up of loose ends' section can sometimes also involve the detective uncovering one last vital clue to wrap up the entire investigation, such as Deckard discovering his own secret origins when he finds the origami unicorn outside his apartment in *Blade Runner*. Often in film noirs the detective's victory is always inhibited to a degree in that, while they did stop these specific antagonists, the world that created them is still as corrupt, such as in *LA Confidential* when Exley has to compromise the truth of his story in order to protect the integrity of the police station. Likewise Sibyl still has one more loose end to tie up by exposing Larissa Abney for the actual murder of Greta, but despite all her efforts Sibyl realizes that the surrogacy industry is still as popular as ever. The power outage incident causes massive investigations into Alter Scope, which exposes the black market.

Alter Scope loses much of its business to competing surrogacy companies.

Sibyl meets with Larissa Abney, who has now been promoted after Boudica's arrest. Larissa comes to Sibyl to offer her the managerial position, within the company, that she always wanted. Sibyl, however, has already put the dots together. Since Boudica didn't kill Greta, this left only one other person in the company who could have covered it up. Once Sibyl gets Abney to sign a new contract with her, Sibyl compares Abney's signature to the writings in the Milly journal; a perfect match. Abney admits that she killed Greta after she uncovered what Boudica was planning on doing: selling Greta off to another customer. After two years of surrogating Greta's body and creating a second identity through her, Abney felt she had a right to Greta and if she couldn't have control of this body, no one could. Sibyl shows Abney that she has been recording the entire conversation. Sibyl exposes Abney to the world.

Sibyl now with no clear future and a fractured memory of who she was, before becoming a surrogate, decides to return home to try put the pieces back together and see what she can be outside of Alter Scope. Sibyl plans to return home with Cody, but learns that he is not ready to go back yet. Sibyl is unsure if Cody is going to go back to surrogating, despite all they went through. Sibyl, now showing an understanding and compassion towards Cody's addiction, hugs him goodbye and tells him she'll be waiting when he's ready.

As Sibyl leaves, she looks around the city, realizing just how many bodies are currently being surrogated all around her and that this business is still as popular as ever. Sibyl, nonetheless, leaves the city in the hopes of creating a new future for herself outside of surrogacy.

Creating the Story

As I stated earlier, *Broken Chain* began merely as a vague collage of ideas, which I wished to build into some sort of coherent story. Throughout the year and a half of development, various drastic changes had to be made.

Phase 1. Originally I wanted to stay close to the same ideas and themes about identity that I had explored in my short film, *A Perfect Host*. Alter Scope, as a company, existed but there was no murder mystery angle to the story. Instead it was more of a sci-fi love triangle. In this version Sibyl's body was hired out by Jane, who was a reporter doing a piece on surrogacy. Jane, however, succumbs to the escapism of living in a younger body and, through Sibyl's body, has an affair with her own ex husband, Kai (who, like in the later versions, was an artist).

Later on in the story traces of Jane's memories, habits and desires got left in Sibyl's mind, like a human hard drive, resulting in Sibyl acting more and more like Jane. This also had Sibyl returning home only to discover that the memories she had, of her mother, belonged to one of her clients. She also realizes, later, that Sibyl isn't even her real name, but an alias given to her by the company. The memory of her real name was now wiped due to the effects of surrogacy.

This version was where the name Sibyl derived from, in homage to the actress from the book *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, who was only valued by Dorian when playing other people and was, subsequently, rejected by him when she tried to be herself. Likewise Sibyl was only of value when other people were controlling her, and ultimately lost any value in her own identity because of it.

The biggest criticism I received for this version was that the love triangle angle was too narrow for the much broader concept of a world where body leasing was a business.

Phase 2. I conceded that the story needed a stronger vehicle and so decided to go down the route of many classic tech noirs, by adding in a murder mystery. The concept of someone committing murder in another person's body was certainly worth looking into. Alas, I went at this in a very sideways manner and had it so that Sibyl awakens in the middle of a murder scene and has to find out 'who had been surrogating her at the time?'

Jane was still present, only now she was a cop investigating surrogacy and yet still ended up sleeping with Kai while inhabiting the body of Sibyl. There was an actual reason I kept that part in, but looking back now it seems pretty silly. There was also a surrogate called Greta, who began to have a breakdown as her numbers dropped, but she was only Sibyl's roommate at this point. This version had a far simpler 'whodunnit?' plot structure, as Sibyl traces the possible identity of the murderer down to three of her regular customers. Sibyl then had to investigate her clients and find out why these people rented out her body? This version lacked much of a satisfying conclusion, suffered from too much techno-babble and was still rather limited in its scope.

Phase 3. The idea of a customer killing a surrogate, while in control of them, sparked my interest and, thus, I decided to kill off Greta. She was still only Sibyl's friend for a few drafts of the outline until I realized, very cynically, that it would add more conflict if she were Sibyl's lover. It's quite vulgar looking back now, just how callously all these different story elements entered into the equation, originally. This however was the most confused and ridiculous of all the phases, to the point that I had considered not even documenting it here out of sheer embarrassment. In this version Abney kills Greta, after learning that permanent transfer of consciousness would not be possible. It got even stranger, however, as I tried to add the twist that Greta wanted Abney to take over her body, in the hopes of creating a new perfect identity between the two of them.

This was dropped because 1. It severely put into question the integrity of Sibyl and Greta's relationship, if Greta would do this behind Sibyl's back or that Sibyl wouldn't realize Greta was willing to do such a thing, and 2, because it didn't make sense. The ethos of reincarnation played a much bigger part in this version and the concept of Greta wanting to forfeit her own identity, for a new one, carried on at the end when Sibyl, now with nothing left to live for, decides to forfeit her own life to be reincarnated as well (essentially allowing someone else to take over her body permanently). Anyway, it was a bit of a messy phase, which actually went through several drafts before being abandoned. One part about it that I did like was the very end in which Sibyl is greeted by Cody, but no longer recognizes him after the operation, as someone else is now in control of her. This was an ending that haunted me, in a good way, but unfortunately the route to that ending just didn't make a whole lot of sense. Although in later drafts I did continue to toy with the idea of Sibyl losing and having her body taken over at the very end.

Phase 4. This version now had most of the key elements of the final script but with a few differences. Mostly that it had twice as many characters and the conspiracy was overly complex. After Greta's death a new surrogate, named Becca, was brought in to live with Sibyl. Becca was added for three reasons. 1. To show the conveyor belt nature of the business, that the moment Greta died Alter Scope would send in someone new to take her place. 2. So we could meet someone new entering the industry that we could learn more about surrogacy through. And 3. So Sibyl could bump into her at the very end and see that she was being surrogated, therefore realizing that, despite all her achievements, surrogacy was still continuing on. In the end there just wasn't enough room for Becca.

The character of Julian, who briefly appears in the last draft, was also more prominent and was intended to fill the void of the Becca character at one point, by switching him in for the aforementioned finale scene.

There was also a character named Conroy Jones, who was the first super star of surrogacy that died very young. Essentially the James Dean of surrogacy. The script had many John Lennon-esque mass mourning scenes with customers, who had leased Conroy Jones' body and therefore felt very close to him. Cody was also Greta's brother originally, until Howie suggested that it would make more sense if he were Sibyl's.

Then there was also Julia, a former surrogate whose now wasted life, was meant to be a forewarning for Sibyl as to what could happen to her if she left Alter Scope. Boudica's backstory was more elaborate too, involving an accident she had had in an older surrogacy pod, which burnt all her skin. This was meant to be the reason for her surrogate dependency and her resentment towards Abney, whom she blamed for the accident.

Boudica also had a husband named Arthur Cray, who helped create surrogacy alongside Abney. Cray attempted to transfer his consciousness into the body of Conroy Jones, but the operation ended up killing both of them. The discovery that Cray and Jones died at the same time was a revelatory clue in Sibyl's investigation. The footage leaked in the Alter Scope building was originally meant to be of Cray and Jones in this botched operation. 'Broken chain' also had its own secret website for some reason. I myself am already getting confused just recalling this overlong version.

Phase 5. With many unnecessary characters either removed or combined, I was able to map out a more coherent murder-mystery vehicle, though even this was still quite difficult. Early drafts involved way too much talking and quite often had Sibyl gathering clues by having other characters willingly share confidential information with her. It was all too easy for Sibyl. Thus I had to create more coherent obstacles for her that she would have to use her wits to get out of.

From reading Robert Grant's book, *Writing the Science Fiction Film*, I realized that good Sci-Fi films always have their protagonist as the perfect hero for that particular world. The protagonist often had a distinct connection to the obstacle of the movie whether it were androids, aliens or dinosaur clones etc. Thus, I put a bigger emphasis on how Sibyl's vast knowledge of the industry actually made her the perfect person to uncover this conspiracy.

In earlier drafts it was Greta who was the more industry savvy of the two. Sibyl originally began as more naive and star stuck by the industry, so that her journey would require her to slowly break out of this delusion. In the end it was hard to do this without making Sibyl seem weaker as a character for being so clueless, given the blatant negative signs of surrogacy all around her, even before Greta's murder. Boudica originally had many more prevalent surrogates that she fluctuated between but these were later combined, since it required too many new names to expect the audience to remember.

Cody had his own stake out and action scene inside Boudica's mansion in the final act, which was removed as it made no sense how Cody's character could pull off either of those things given his various inhibitions. Cody also was, originally, the one who leaks the operation footage, thus saving Sibyl. This obviously had to be changed because it was not very dramatically satisfying having our protagonist getting rescued in the end. Cody's involvement in the investigation was trimmed down, then, from this earlier version.

Jane was originally an investor with 'broken chain', whose backstory was more prevalent. The very short scene, in which Sibyl is surrogated and kisses an artist named Kai, originally had dialogue and was meant to show that Jane had created a second identity and romantic relationship while inhabiting Sibyl's body. Sibyl later manages to trick Jane into giving her information on 'broken chain' by pretending that she is looking for a raise from the company or she will quit (some of this interaction was later integrated into Sibyl's attempted interrogation of Michael

Bellows). The clues Sibyl gathered from Jane would then lead her to investigate Bellows. Jane was also going to be the customer at the end who tries to take over Sibyl's body permanently. In the end Jane's interrogation just held up the plot too much and her obsession with creating a second identity, through surrogacy, was too similar to Larissa Abney's story. Jane was essentially removed, but then recreated as a surrogacy junky to illustrate Sibyl's disregard for her customers and their addictions.

Other small adjustments were made after this. Sibyl was originally going to be trapped in the cottage when it got burnt down, resulting in a daring escape. The finale was also meant to happen in a remote facility rather than back at the main Alter Scope building. But otherwise it was mostly just a case of trimming down scenes.

While the majority of what was removed was certainly not necessary, there are still a few darlings I had to kill that I miss. One scene had Cody, while inhabiting the body of a surrogate, trying to convince a young woman to actually meet him in person, resulting in Cody getting rejected and realizing just how false his surrogacy experiences have really been. I also would have liked to explore more of the relationship between Boudica and her surrogates, particularly the aspect of the surrogates developing a type of hive mind from being constantly controlled by her. There was also originally a montage opening, which showed the history of surrogacy, portraying a connection between our timeline and the timeline of the movie.

Future Plans for The Screenplay

At present I plan on staying put in Canada, instead of returning to my homeland of Ireland, to pursue my career as a writer over here. As long as the country will still have me, that is. My options with a feature screenplay, particularly a science fiction one, are unfortunately a little limited though. *Broken Chain* has a wide budgetary scope given the look and scale of the world, the crowd scenes and the props/special effects that would be required.

With the current TV dominated market, trying to pitch a feature script within the Canadian industry, no matter what the standard, is a bit like trying to sell a really powerful moped to NASCAR.

This is not a complaint but, rather, a realistic understanding of Toronto's industry. With this in mind, I do have some plans for it through the competition avenue, many of which will be taking in submissions at the time of my defense. If I can win any award with *Broken Chain* it will greatly heighten its appeal to producers. There are also hosting sites such as The Blacklist that could get it in front of various industry professionals. I have no immediate plans to move to L.A. any time soon, so for now the competition route will be my main objective.

Developing *Broken Chain* has helped improve my writing, as well as my overall understanding and appreciation of the craft. It has been a terrific journey and, whatever happens from here, I am delighted that I was able to bring this concept into fruition and push myself out of my comfort zone in terms of character development and story structure, as well as exploring the various thematic concepts which attracted me to this project in the first place.

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